

# ST. LOUIS ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT *ESPRIT*

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January 2003



The Robert A. Young Federal Building at the corner of Spruce Street and Tucker Boulevard looked like this when the US Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District moved in about September 1990.  
GSA photograph

## 1222 Spruce Street

The brown brick building at the corner of Spruce Street and Tucker Boulevard has served as Headquarters of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District for more than a decade. It's a 72 year-old building that combines a rich history with modern conveniences that today is capable of providing high-tech work space for more than 3,000 federal government employees.

The building, known as the Robert A. Young (R.A.Y.) Federal Building, honors Young, who sponsored legislation to renovate the Mart Building and consolidate several federal agencies into one central, government-owned building.

He was elected to the Missouri House of Representatives in 1956. He continued to serve in the House until 1962 when he was elected to the Missouri Senate.

He left state politics upon his election to the US House of Representatives in 1977 and served until 1986.

Young was a member of the Pipe Fitter's Union before he entered politics. He spent an earlier part of his work life in this building as a union pipe fitter.

The R.A.Y. Building began life in 1931 as the St. Louis Mart and Terminal Warehouse, as the offices and warehouse for the Terminal Railroad Association, which served both sides of the River with local freight car movement and switching yards. The railroad — long gone from the building — continues to serve the area with local rail car movement today.

The building was transferred to control by the U.S. Army in 1941 at the beginning of World War II. It became property of the General Services Administration (GSA), which operates it today, in 1961.

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## Commander's Perspective



**COL Kevin Williams**

I went to Washington, DC in late January and got a firsthand update from our Chief of Engineers. I don't want to be stingy with this information - rather, I want to share what he is saying with you.

Lieutenant General Flowers' remarks were wide-ranging, but he noted first that Corps support to military operations worldwide is not just "business as usual." Nearly 200 people from the Corps family are currently deployed to over 90 countries in support of our military forces.

The General next reminded us how important it is to continue to work hard to develop our relationships with folks we don't normally include in our "Corps Family." He noted that he had just signed an memorandum of understanding with the Fish and Wildlife Service

and praised the cooperation that is ongoing in the Upper Mississippi River - Illinois Water Way study. We are already moving out on this here in St. Louis where I have Owen Dutt heading up a project deliver team to develop better ways to work with environmental non-governmental organizations.

The Chief then indicated a strong possibility that we will see a Water Resources Development Act in 2003 and that it will likely contain something about "Corps Transformation." He said he welcomed this because he felt some provisions would enable us to do our jobs better and finally put to rest, the controversy that has ensued during recent months.

He also discussed outsourcing and the Third Wave, noting that he is working closely with Army Secretary White and will meet soon with Secretary of Defense to reinforce the value of USACE to the nation as a core element for national defense.

Moving on to Project Management Business Plan, General Flowers reinforced his determination that we will be functioning this way, with P2 Automated Information System, by 01 October. He reminded us all that we should be working on module four of training and starting to plan to introduce the P2.

Finally, the general noted that USACE would unveil new learning initiatives next year, including Learning Network Knowledge Management. Learning Network is the new name for the former term USACE University.

In closing, he reiterated his priorities for us all:

- We are on wartime footing. Pay attention to taskings; this is not business as usual.

- Account for your people. Know where they are in the field and when you expect them to return.

- Reinforce and use communication principles.

- Bring home the vision - one team, one learning organization.

I want to echo the Chief's comments and follow with my compliments to everyone in the District for the magnificent work you are all doing.

The past few weeks have been a test of good planning, good coordination and a lot of hard work as we have labored hand in hand with the Coast Guard and navigation industry to keep barges moving on the Mississippi.

People who have been here for a long time tell me that the last time the Mississippi went down this far, that six dredges were necessary in this District alone to keep the river open. The fact that we have kept traffic moving with only Dredge Potter - and she was laid up for two weeks at the start of this low water situation - demonstrates that despite very low water, we have achieved and are maintaining the navigation channel. Our fall maintenance dredging plan and the river engineering structures we have installed over the last years are paying off.

We are getting the job done and I am extremely proud of all you do. Let's keep it up.

Essayons!



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**  
St. Louis District®

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### 1222 Spruce Street Cont.

The war years were a time that resulted in one of the more famous stories concerning the building, that there was a fireplace on the top floor, and that an Army general resided in an apartment there. The story is partly true. But it's on the 18th floor of the 20-story tower structure. The top two floors are in fact occupied by a series of water tanks that would provide water under high pressure if the building ever suffered a major fire.

The General's quarters today - still with the fireplace in a corner - are a scene of little beauty except for the magnificent views in all directions. Part of the floor space is today occupied by elevator machinery, while heating, ventilation and air conditioning blowers take up more square footage. The former apartment is surprisingly small.

A ceramic tile floor in one area



The view from the tower section is impressive even on rainy days.

indicates where the General's bathroom was once located.

A less known true story is that there was a club facility with a bar on the floor immediately below. There are walkout balconies on three sides affording magnificent views along Tucker Boulevard, toward the stadium and the recently renovated Edison Warehouse, now home to the Sheraton Hotel. Nothing remains of that, and the space is mostly open now.



Today, the generals' corner fireplace makes an empty promise of warmth.

Floors 16 down through 11 are much the same, unused, dusty, but with impressive views.

We are indebted to Russ Elliott, who shot most of the photos for this story, and for his recollections about the building. Many are first hand memories, as Elliott's dad was a GSA carpenter here from 1959 to 1963.

Elliott relates the following list of facts as he remembers them:

- The armed forces recruiting and induction center (now Military Entry Processing Service, or MEPS) was on the 2nd floor. New recruits left St. Louis via train for basic training. Now everyone leaves for basic training by air, but they make the initial journey to Lambert International via Metro Link.

- The carpenter shop was located where the current fitness center is.

In those days, Elliott tells, the carpenters had to cut all materials in the basement and then move them to the job site. There were GSA rules against using portable electric saws on the office floors. Cordless electric screwdrivers didn't exist yet and carpenters instead used a Yankee spiral screwdriver. These had a huge return spring that in the wrong hands was considered very dangerous. GSA authorized the screwdrivers to be used, but mandated that the return springs be removed. That made them slower to use. Elliott still has his dad's Yankee screwdriver. It's very fast and you don't have to worry about the batteries going down.

- There were three additional elevators. A conventional size elevator ran the ten floors and had outside access from 13th street. Two additional freight elevators were accessible from 13th street and the basement. They were large enough to lift a dump truck. Elliott's dad told him of once seeing a pickup truck driving around the tenth floor. During the 1987-91 renovation process, GSA raised the existing concrete floors approximately 8 inches to accommodate the data, phone and electrical lines. Ceilings were lowered approximately 24 inches to allow for heating and air-conditioning ducts. Envision a little over 2 1/2 ft



An exquisite brass-railed, marble stairway in the building's original entrance lends a taste of elegance foreign to typical federal building lobbys.

additional ceiling clearance, Elliott reports, and you can really imagine trucks making railroad deliveries throughout the warehouse.

- Safety regulations were a little looser in the old days and Elliott's dad told him of riding on the top of the east bank of elevators. Whatever freight they needed on the upper floors (above 10) rode on top of the elevator. Dad steadied the load and the elevator was stopped manually a floor below to allow removal and loading. There are no barriers between the elevators and you could see the other cars traveling up and down the 18 floors.

- The current daycare center was formerly the cafeteria. Elliott remembers helping his dad on a weekend, replacing the entire floor with new 9x9 asbestos tiles - thousands of them. The floor was beige with a burgundy stripe through it.

- And finally, KMOX radio, the voice of the St. Louis Cardinals, used to broadcast from the current auditorium. During the late 50's the government wanted to renovate the old KMOX area. Elliott's dad discovered a huge telephone cable running through a partition he was removing. His boss contacted the telephone company, and they authorized Elliott's dad to cut the "abandoned line".

More than 100 phones suddenly went dead.

- Parking was a challenge then too, and several maintenance workers got together and rented the St. Louis City space under Tucker for parking. The rent was divided by the number of persons parking. It worked out to be \$7 per month. They still had trouble getting some to cough up the cash. St. Louis city allowed free parking along the 12th and 14th street overpasses but you had to get there early .

- The main entrance to the building was from 12th street, now Tucker Blvd. You could also enter the building from Spruce through what is now the GSA office. There was a set of stairs from Spruce level and a short hallway to the front bank of elevators.

In intervening years, considerable space has been added to the original building, with floors being added south and west of the tower.

The Corps of Engineers moved here in September of 1990, transferring from its previous downtown St. Louis location at 210 Tucker .

Today the former commercial building, later Army building, is a modern, state of the art facility that can accommodate

some 3000 federal employees, contractors and support personnel.

Comprising more than a million square feet of floor space, the building's usable space is some 810,000 square feet.

Have they ever considered renovating and putting into use the tower above the 10th floor?

According to Building Manager Tom Yochim, they have indeed. But it would require addition of another elevator (only one runs to the top floors) and an exterior fire escape at an estimated cost of more than \$2 million. In addition, each floor would have to be renovated as well, and the square footage could not earn sufficient rent to make the project feasible.

So at least for now, the tower will remain unoccupied, supporting only elevator machinery, ventilation equipment and the fire suppression system. It's fun to imagine what it might be like to survey the city in twilight hours from more than 200 feet above Spruce Street, but nobody is likely ever to offer the money that would make this feasible.



The Mart Building in the 1930's looks considerably different before the main part of the building was raised to ten floors.





## George Postal, the way we remember him

George Postal was an engineer's engineer. He was a consummate professional. He was a husband, a father and a grandfather. He was a man who thought constantly and who acted quickly. He didn't mind getting his hands dirty.

He was revered by those who worked for and with him. He was recognized as a "mother bear" by any who considered reaching into his branch and tampering with one of his "family members." He was at the same time, tougher than Chinese algebra and gentler than any doting parent.

George hadn't really been well for some time when he left us on January 9, 2003, four months short of 41 years from the day he came to work in the St. Louis District.

George's final bout with illness began September 11, 2002. He was in Tampa, Florida, at a Dam Safety Meeting. His wife Karen, a registered nurse was with him when he uncharacteristically complained of a headache and other complications. She encouraged him to seek immediate medical care and he did.

During the following days his family hovered close by as George lay in a coma. Finally he was stable enough to be flown by air ambulance back to St. Louis. Former District Engineer Colonel Mike Morrow, then stationed in Tampa, assisted the St. Louis District in making arrangements to get George home.

District employees followed a series of e-mail reports from his brother, Ted, and we all prayed for his recovery.

"I couldn't believe he would not come striding in some morning, questions and answers pouring out of him as he arrived," said Mark Alvey.

"But then after Christmas week, his son Sean came in to get George's personal effects from his office - and I wasn't so sure then," Alvey went on. "George was diagnosed with cancer in the summer of 2001," Alvey remembered. "He had chemotherapy every Thursday for awhile. He would call



A rare photo of George in his office. He would much rather be with his people or out on the work site.

*This article is not intended as tears for George Postal nor is it his obituary. It won't list educational achievements, club affiliations or include a comprehensive roster of survivors. Rather, we have assembled recollections from George's "Corps Family" about his accomplishments, his professional stature and most of all, his humanity.*

from the hospital as they were hooking up IV's, asking questions, giving advice and answering our needs. We all knew how the treatment made George feel. But on Friday morning he walked in just like always," Alvey concluded.

According to Ed Demskey, who had worked with George since 1974, "I'd probably have retired under similar circumstances. But he just kept coming in."

Mark Alvey commented similarly. "People wonder out loud why he didn't retire - didn't slow down to enjoy retirement. I'll tell you why. George was a full participant in life. He enjoyed his work. His life was all about his work and his family. He did retirement things while he was working - cruises, family activities, etc., and he kept working. For

him, vacations were time to think. I almost dreaded his return from a vacation that had afforded him ample time to contemplate issues, but it sure was exciting."

And George read voluminously. His reading spanned from the many reports going out of the Geotechnical Branch - he wanted everything to be right and was willing to read a report at home if necessary to get it that way - to his beloved *National Geographic* and *Smithsonian* magazines.

Mike Navin said, "George was committed to his work." Joe Schwenk saw it similarly. "His routine was critical to him. He threw his whole self into whatever he was doing."

Mark Alvey reported that in addition to being a great engineer, George knew what it took to manage work flow, to keep his people employed and productive. "Oh, he didn't like Corps of Engineers Financial Management System, (CEFMS), but he had a consummate understanding of how to use it as a tool to track work and money - and to keep them on track." In fact, he mastered CEFMS and others relied on him to help them make it work for them.

George's portfolio of District projects reads like a "what's what" for the past four decades. He was here when Rend Lake, Lake Shelbyville, Carlyle Lake and Mark Twain were built. He was here for the Mel Price Locks and Dam too.

"George was probably the most geologically oriented geotech engineer I ever met," said Mike Navin. "He knew more about soil mechanics - both analytically and practically than anyone else in the world," said Ed Demskey.

Demskey went on to tell, "George really showed how much he knew during the flood of 1993. He could anticipate problems, he knew how to correct them, and he fixed them before levees could fail. He had great rapport with levee districts and their commissioners. They trusted him implicitly."

Stories about George and his ways are rife around his old office.

George's mind was always going, but



it wasn't always evident by his body language, Ed Demsky told. "He would sit in a protracted meeting and might appear to be asleep. A complicated issue would be on the table, and while George sat quietly, eyes closed, the discussion would roll on. Suddenly George would open his eyes and offer up what turned out to be the correct conclusion. When he was told everyone thought he was asleep, he'd reply: 'I was just resting my eyes.'"

Another recent story concerned George's arrival at a test trench at a road embankment construction project. It was conjectured that a contractor hadn't sufficiently compacted the soil. During testing, George quickly disappeared into the trench and sometime later, hands and clothes soiled, reappeared with exactly what he needed to answer the question: the contractor hadn't done the job correctly and had to redo it.

The measures of respect for George Postol are also everywhere evident when you talk to the people who worked for him.

Joe Schwenk remembers him as being liked by everyone. "He was really liked by his more junior people. He never acted like he was the GS-14 and they were GS-7s. He didn't micromanage his



George was a gifted soils engineer. He was happiest in the field, getting his boots muddy and being involved firsthand in projects.

people. The only limits they had were their selves and the regulations. He let people go to their extremes - encouraged them, in fact. "He was a people person and a great technical mentor. He was a nice, nice man," he concluded. Many reported that they never saw him get truly angry with anyone who worked for him. If he ever did, he certainly

never embarrassed them.

And those feelings emerged in volumes after George's passing. Mark Alvey has prepared a book of e-mails from friends and colleagues for George's family. "I know they were surprised by what people had to say about him. Employees, people from other districts and divisions, from headquarters and from industry all loved and respected him. He was always there to help them get the job done."

Alvey continued, telling how his family was surprised at the awards and certificates in his office, mostly in drawers, out of sight. "George didn't carry his triumphs home. He just went home to his family."

And now George Postol won't be back into his fourth floor office again. Slowly those who were around him are realizing that the legacy George left is in fact, them. He nurtured them, he loved them, he created a work place for them to grow and mature. And now he has passed the tasks to them. He has left nothing that needs to be redone, or anything that needs to be done better. But God only knows, everyone will miss him... and that hurts so badly.



George's easy-going style made him a natural in front of the media cameras. He was a master at telling the Corps' story, as he is here at the dedication of the Ste. Genevieve, Missouri levee in August 2002.





L to R Carlyle Lake Manager Bob Wilkins, Charles Gilkey, and Assistant Lake Manager Dick Conner.

### Commander's Awards Presented to Federal Correctional Institution Personnel

Warden Charles Gilkey, and Camp Unit Manager Mike Lashbrook of the Greenville, Illinois Federal Correctional Institute were presented with a Commander's Award for Public Service by Carlyle Lake Project Manager Robert Wilkins on Thursday, January 2, 2003. The two were recognized by the St. Louis District Corps of Engineers for their support, which contributed significantly to the completion of numerous unfunded projects at the Carlyle Lake Project, through the use of inmate labor.

In December of 1997, a Memorandum of Agreement was established between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Carlyle Lake/Kaskaskia Navigation Project Office and the Federal Bureau of

Prisons' Greenville Federal Correctional Institution. This agreement allows for the use of inmates from the Greenville Federal Prison Camp to accomplish unfunded work that otherwise would not be completed at the Carlyle Lake/Kaskaskia Navigation Project. Since the inception of the program, numerous unfunded projects have been completed utilizing inmate labor, providing enhanced opportunities for Carlyle Lake Visitors. Mr. Gilkey and Mr.

Lashbrook's support during and after the 2002 flood event, allowed for Carlyle Lake facilities to reopen rapidly. The work, dedication, and communication provided by Mr. Gilkey and Mr. Lashbrook has been invaluable to the Corps of Engineers and the public. For additional information, contact the Carlyle Lake Project Office, (618) 594-2484.

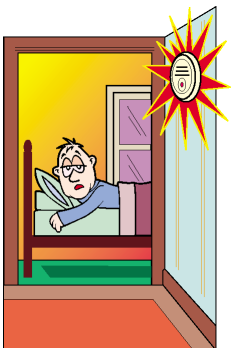


L to R Carlyle Lake Manager Bob Wilkins, Camp Administrator Angela Dunbar, and Assistant Lake Manager Dick Conner.

### More states require home gas detectors

Low-cost carbon monoxide detectors can save lives, experts say, and states are beginning to require them.

Most people are surprised to learn that carbon monoxide is the leading cause of accidental



poisoning in the U.S. It takes some 2,000 lives a year and makes many times that number sick.

Though carbon-monoxide detectors are widely available, fewer than a third of homes have them. That could change as more states pass laws requiring them in homes.

Some cities are taking action on their own. Chicago and St. Louis, for example, have ordinances requiring them. The legislation has lifesaving effects. Cities that require carbon-monoxide detectors have much lower death rates from exposure to the gas than those that don't.

### Mark Twain Lake Special Events 2003

- Outdoor Writers Association of America Photo Exhibit  
June 1-24, 2003
- Kids Fishing Day  
June 7, 2003
- Primitive Artifacts Weekend  
June 7-8, 2003
- Women in the Outdoors  
TBA
- Mark Twain Lake Rodeo  
July 3-5, 2003
- Mark Twain Lake Waterfest  
July 5, 2003
- CAST For Kids  
July 26, 2003
- 23rd Annual Salt River Folklife Festival  
August 9-10, 2003
- North American Bullriding Association World Championship Finals  
August 29-30, 2003
- Environmental Education Fair  
September 19, 2003
- An Adventure in Astronomy  
September 20, 2003
- Missouri Mule Days  
September 27-28, 2003

A study published in the American Journal of Emergency Medicine, points out in Chicago where detectors are mandated, only 0.4 percent of those exposed to the gas died. In Los Angeles, 15 percent of those exposed to carbon monoxide died.

There are many possible sources such as a furnace, kitchen stove, water heater, fireplace, generator, charcoal broiler, and anything that burns fossil fuels (gasoline, diesel fuel, wood and kerosene).

Protect yourself and your household. Install a carbon-monoxide detector





## Boundary Line Maintenance and Inspection:

The start of 2003 marks the annual commencement of boundary line maintenance and inspection at Wappapello Lake. Several crews began the inspection and maintenance of over 90 miles of boundary scheduled to be completed in the following months. The boundary line is inspected for things such as encroachments, dumping and ATV activity. Maintenance work is also performed which includes the marking of the boundary line by painting trees, sign installation and repair, and the marking of monuments and bearing trees. Each two-person crew walks approximately 3 miles per day carrying all needed equipment. Wappapello Lake's Natural Resource Program is responsible for maintaining over 200 total miles of boundary.



Natural Resource Specialist James Gracey and Becky Hays hike a portion of the over 200 miles of Lake Wappapello property line. Physical boundary patrol of federal property is an important aspect of our land stewardship. Becky Hays works in the Visitor Assistance Program at Wappapello Lake.



Park Ranger Dick Chenoweth captured these tranquil winter scenes of the Lake Wappapello Visitor Center and the pig tail in front of the gatehouse.



Park Ranger Eric Lemons with the Barred Owl.

## Injured Barred Owl

A local resident brought an injured Barred Owl to the Wappapello Lake Project Office on December 18. The owl was observed and then released into the woods behind the project office. The owl may have been struck by a vehicle and stunned.





## Norman Puckett, the “Go To” Guy



Every work place has at least one person who can be relied upon to put forth the maximum effort to get a job done. Rend Lake is fortunate enough to

employ one of those special people. Maintenance Worker Norman Puckett is Rend Lake’s “go to” guy. When you have an idea that requires special skills and a common sense approach no one gives it a second thought - go to Norm! It’s not just 30 years of accumulated knowledge on the job that makes Norm such a valuable commodity in the Rend Lake workplace, but also his willingness to do anything. Norm freely shares his vast knowledge with co-workers.

Norm began his career with the Rend Lake project on April of 1973, when he was hired as a WG-2 temporary laborer in the maintenance department. In two short years, he was promoted to a WG-5 seasonal position. Management quickly recognized his ability to deliver a quality product in the most efficient way. Norm continued up the ladder (carpentry humor) and was promoted to a 9-month seasonal position as a WG-07 carpentry worker in 1978. A combination of personnel cutbacks and increased workload worked to Norm’s advantage. He converted to full-time status in the year 2000. Rend Lake relies on his plumbing, carpentry, and heavy equipment operation skills on a daily basis.

Norm lives on a small farm with his wife Marilyn and daughter Mary Beth, a senior at the Thompsonville, Illinois High School. Off duty, Norm is an avid quail hunter. He prides himself on his top quality English Setters, he raises. He likes to joke about a pointer he once raised. The puppy watched the Setters work so much that it became convinced that it too was a Setter. It would mimic Setters in the field, not acting like a typical pointer dog. So, Norm jokes that



Here’s Norman floating concrete on the new Rend Lake bike trail

he has only had Setters.

With his wife Marilyn’s help, Norm raises most of the vegetables they consume year around. Television’s “Victory Gardens” had nothing on the Puckett’s garden.

Norm maintains bragging rights of having the largest, sweetest cantaloupes in the county. He is assured of maintaining that right. He has saved the seeds from the previous, record-producing crops and has maintained the strain for over 25 years. Norm received the seeds from his father many years ago. His father has since passed away and Norm still fondly speaks of the passage of the seeds from father to son. The largest cantaloupe he has ever raised weighed in at 25 lbs. In last summer’s drought, Norm still managed to harvest a plump, 18-pounder from the garden. Marilyn typically shares in the delight of the garden’s abundance. Norm bought a strain of cabbage called “Market Toppers” and each individual cabbage would exceed the size of a bushel basket. She put a halt to Norm’s growing large vegetables. “It isn’t that Marilyn didn’t like cabbage, she just couldn’t figure out what to do with the excess after canning what she wanted and supplying all the neighbors with ample amounts,” Norm reports.

Norm attributes his gardening success to the fertilizer that he uses. He isn’t reluctant to share his secret. I use “race horse manure. It has to be race horse manure, because just plain old work horse manure makes your plants grow too slow.”

Norm’s garden is the stuff of legends. Norm tills, plants and harvests 12 acres surrounding his home. He enjoys fishing and serves as chief cook at all Rend Lake social functions. His specialties include fried fish and the best fried turkey ever put on a plate!

All the employees at Rend Lake find Norman Puckett a sheer delight to work with and view his career and his personal life, a SUCCESS in every sense of the word.



Norm is busy filling a hole at the edge of the parking lot.



## Slithering at Rend Lake

By Michael Edwards, Park Ranger

Rend Lake offers a variety of nature programming to the public. One of the most popular programs features snakes. Reptiles have a fascinating life history. There are several ways to introduce visitors to the habits and natural history of the snake. At Rend Lake we tell the story by using live animals.

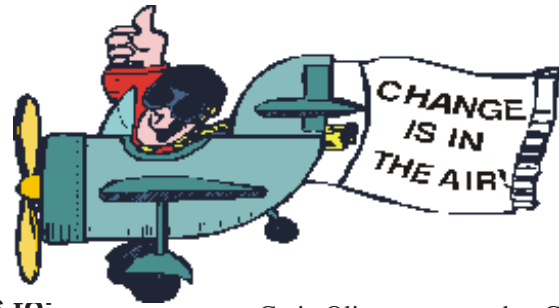


Stubby the snake at Rend Lake

Snakes serve an important role in the environment, controlling the rodent population. Natural resource management agencies invest time and effort into providing educational opportunities for their visitors, recognizing that an educated public is more likely to protect and cherish our natural resources.

The history of Rend Lake's snake programs have been lost through the years, however, we know that they have been favorites for more than 25 years. Park rangers are not born fearless when it comes to snakes. Most must conquer deep-seated fears in order to make effective presentations. Veteran snake presenters are entitled to relate chilling and often times hilarious stories about their experiences in handling these creatures. Snakes that suddenly decide to escape or bite in front of audiences are subjects of numerous stories among the handlers.

*Snakes of Rend Lake are on display at the Rend Lake Visitor Center from April through October. If you'd like to meet some of Rend Lake's star performing snakes, stop in and introduce yourself as a Corps employee. As a District employee you are entitled to handle our snake friends Stubby, Houdini, Freckles, Elvis, and Boscoe.*



## Congratulations to:

- Sonja Moore, promoted to GS-8 in the Exec Office.
- Douglas Wasmuth, converted to career conditional Park Ranger, GS-5, Carlyle Lake.
- Brian Markert, promoted to GS-12, PPPMD.
- Kathryn Manar, promoted to GS-9 at Riverlands Section.
- Carlis Lairson, promoted to WG-8, Carlyle Lake.
- Douglas Kraemer, promoted to GS-3 at Carlyle Lake.
- Stacie Bedard, promoted to GS-7 at Carlyle Lake.
- Terrence Becker, promoted to WG-8 at Carlyle Lake.
- Kent Hayes, promoted to GS-11, IM.
- Jonathan Clark, converted to General Attorney from Law Clerk, GS-11 in OC and from term to indefinite appointment.
- Sheila Burnett, promoted to GS-12 in RM-B.
- Craig Litteken, promoted to GS-12 in Regulatory.
- Michael Daily, promoted to GS-12 in Regulatory.
- William Trout, promoted to GS-11 in ED-SD.
- Ashley Mathias, promoted to GS-7 at Lake Shelbyville.
- Nick Carroz, promoted to GS-3 at Mark Twain Lake.

- Craig Oliver, promoted to GS-5 at Rend Lake.
- Quinton Pearson, promoted to WY-8 at L&D 25.
- Amanda Sutter, promoted to GS-11 in ED-GE .
- John Miller, promoted to XF-12 on the Dredge Potter.

## Welcome to:

- Ryan Singleton, Student trainee (Civil Engineering) GS-3 in ED-HPR.
- Donald Duncan, new Civil Engineer, GS-7 in ED-HE.
- Carol Ryan, new Park Ranger, GS-11 in Riverlands Section.

## Farewell to:

- Linda Collins who left us for the Department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.
- Deborah Foley who will be leaving us for a job in Albuquerque District
- Rickey Kemp who retired from L&D 27.
- Ted Postol, retired from ED-HQ.
- Ted Hayn, retired from the Service Base.
- Tom Niedernhofer, accepted a job with San Francisco District
- Jerry Mason who retired from the Dredge Potter.
- William Hedger, retired from Mel Price L&D.
- Steven Armstrong, accepted a job with the Navy from ED-P.





The combination of low water and ice flows drew national media attention.

## Low Water Disrupts River Activity

During May 2002 the St. Louis District focused on a flood fight, as the Mississippi River surged to a flood stage of 37.2 feet at the St. Louis gage. During this flood, the St. Louis gage reading reached the 14th highest mark in recorded history.

Eight months later - during the night of January 15-16, 2003, the river fell to - 4.47 feet - nearly 42 feet below the previous spring flood. Ironically, the record low of 1940 also occurred on January 16.

The St. Louis gage reading represents a measurement above and below an arbitrary level designated during a low water period in 1863, when the "zero" reference was established. Today, "0" on the gage represents a nominal navigation depth of a minimum 12.5 feet of water at the gage.

The extreme low water caused the District to resume dredging after ending an already longer-than-normal maintenance dredging season and impacted navigation interests as well as other users, including a floating gambling

casino in East St. Louis, IL, power plants and cargo handling facilities in the region.

The problem began to appear in the late fall of 2002 as a lengthy and widespread low rainfall descended on the Midwest, affecting both the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, as well as their tributaries. In fact, the gage at St. Louis dipped below the "0" reading in early December and several barge groundings occurred in the river near the Jefferson Barracks Bridge. Dredge Potter was ordered to stop work near Chester, Ill. and to proceed to the problem area to restore the channel there (See the December 2002 Esprit).

Maintenance dredging concluded on Friday, January 3, as Potter arrived at her berth at the St. Louis Service Base. Winter upkeep on Potter was started. Some crewmembers were transferred to other District work and seasonal workers were sent home for the winter.

But the onset of unseasonably cold weather over the northern reaches of the Mississippi and Missouri River basins brought on freezing conditions, and with them, the river again started to fall at St. Louis.

As the river's flow inexorably shrunk from its normal seasonal flow of some 120,000 CFS (cubic feet per second) at St. Louis to measurements in the low 40,000 CFS range, it retreated from its normal shoreline and the mandated 9-foot navigation channel narrowed considerably. According to potamology chief Dave Busse, "At low flows like that, losing even a couple of thousand CFS can make a significant difference."

St. Louis District water control personnel worked with counterparts in the St. Paul and Rock Island Districts, to carefully manage dam gate settings to regulate water levels. The eventual outcome could not be changed, but they prevented the river from falling too quickly, which could have stranded barges and towboats.

In almost daily teleconferences, District water control, dredging and operational experts worked closely with U.S. Coast Guard and navigation industry representatives to meet the low-river challenges.

Construction Operations boss Wally Feld ordered Dredge Potter - laid up for the season only days earlier - to be reactivated and returned to duty maintaining the channel. The three groups also agreed to voluntary restrictions to help keep commerce flowing. Southbound tows were limited to 20 barges in a four-wide, five-long configuration. Northbound counterparts were permitted to include 24 barges in their tows. All barges were limited to only an 8.5-foot draft.

As groundings occurred, including the sinking of one barge north of Cape Girardeau, the Coast Guard issued guidance concerning passing and hours of operation in critical areas of the river.

But throughout the protracted period of low water, navigation has continued, virtually unabated.

"That's a success story," according to Chief of Hydrologic and Hydraulics Branch Claude Strauser. "In 1989 when the river was last this low, we had three Corps dredges and three more contract



dredges working day and night to keep the river open from the St. Louis Harbor south,” Strauser added.

The success can be attributed to several factors.

An effective maintenance dredging season planned to ensure a minimum 9-foot deep, 300-foot-wide channel was completed before Potter headed in, and while the work accomplished was based on somewhat more water than the river finally fell to, it nonetheless proved effective.

In addition, ongoing “smart engineering” with dikes, bendway weirs and other channel improvement structures paid handsome dividends as these devices maintained the channel’s width and depth by focusing the river’s energy where it needed to be.

Lastly, cooperation between the Corps, the Coast Guard and navigation interests was instrumental in the struggle to keep the river open.

The navigation industry and its customers have been severely impacted by the low water. When barges are dispatched with smaller than optimal loads, shipping costs rise.

As one industry representative explained, there are fixed-price contracts for delivery to exporters in New Orleans.

When delivery costs go up and must be subtracted from the end figure, everyone - shippers, elevator operators and finally farmers, each share the loss. That in turn, can ultimately affect prices to U.S. consumers as well, because somebody has to make up the difference.

With spring approaching, farmers,

shippers and consumers are watching the weather and its effect on the river with concern. There is little snow pack to melt in the north and west, there has been very little precipitation throughout the winter, and spring rain is at best, unpredictable.

From floods to inadequate flows in eight months, the Corps of Engineers has been called on to moderate the extremes of nature, and it’s people have met the challenge.

The extremes of recent months illustrate that we cannot take the rivers for granted. The rivers of America are vital environmental and economic assets that impact not only people who live near or work on them, but of reaching out and affecting millions more across the nation and around the world.



Corps Dredge Potter is kept busy trying to alleviate navigation problems resulting from the falling river stages.





## USACE Announces first Homeland Security Chief

Washington, DC - Mr. Edward Hecker has been announced to head up the new office of the Chief, Homeland Security Office in the Directorate of Civil Works at the Headquarters of the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The assignment was announced in Washington by Chief of Engineers Lt. Gen Robert Flowers.

Hecker, 52, has been chief of the Civil Emergency Management Branch at Corps headquarters for 10 years.

"I know Ed will do a great job in carrying out this mission of vital importance to our nation's security," said Flowers in announcing Hecker's appointment.

The USACE Homeland Security Office is responsible for USACE civil emergency management and critical infrastructure protection programs. In

addition, Hecker will work with the new U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the Army and Defense Departments to coordinate USACE Homeland Security support.

Hecker said he has two immediate priorities for his new position. "We need, first, to identify the individual and independent homeland security elements, initiatives and programs that are ongoing throughout the Corps, and organize them into a coordinated program framework. Secondly, we need to establish a dialog with our customers, stakeholders and partners to get their views on where USACE needs to focus its homeland security efforts."

A Baltimore native, Hecker has worked at USACE headquarters since August of 1991. He had a previous headquarters assignment from 1982-87. In between, he was chief of Emergency Management for the USACE South Pacific Division in San Francisco.



Hecker Named New USACE Homeland Security Chief

He is a graduate of Johns Hopkins University, with a degree in civil engineering. He and his wife are the parents of three grown children and have one grandchild.

## A Pair of Exceptional District Employees

### Aron Rhoads, December Employee of the Month.

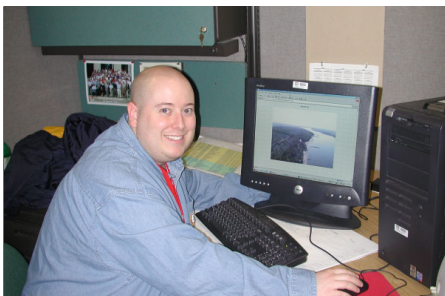
Aron tirelessly compiled an extensive database of every current dike on the Middle Mississippi River, using a computer to sift through 16 hours of aerial videography to extract still images of over 700 structures. He organized these images with other information to create an online database for use of the District's river engineers as well as partnering agencies.

A US Fish and Wildlife Service user commented, "Just wanted to let you know that while recently reviewing the

upcoming O&M dike contracts for the middle river, I accessed and utilized the dike inventory on the Corps' web page. It was a very useful tool and I wanted to let you folks know that we appreciate the time and effort put into developing it!" Never before has such a database been developed in the St. Louis District or in any other district in MVD.

Aron Rhoads has made one stakeholder a raving fan of the St Louis District by doing his job very well.

See Aron's work at: <http://www.mvs.usace.army.mil/engr/River/DikeInv/index.html>



Aron Rhoads, engineering tech, ED-HP

### Mary Ann Dostal, January Employee of the Month.

During the absence and illness of the former Geotechnical Branch Chief, she provided the assistance and continuity to the entire Branch. She applied the skills and organizational knowledge necessary to assist the acting branch chiefs. Her awareness of issues, plus her assistance in tracking the financial accounts for the

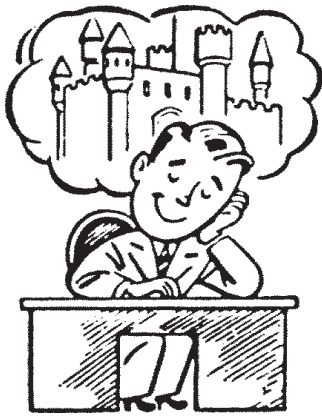


Mary Ann Dostal, secretary, ED-G

branch were extremely helpful in maintaining stability, as well as instrumental in helping the Branch meet its commitments. More importantly, Ms. Dostal handled questions from the family members of the former Branch Chief, treating them with dignity and with a caring attitude, providing tremendous assistance to them during a very trying time. With her caring spirit she demonstrated the goals of investing in people and a commitment to team building, as well as serving the Army. Ms. Dostal clearly demonstrated how the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers takes care of those that serve as well as their families.



## The Way I Remember It



By Claude Strauser

As you drive to the Service Base, past the brewery, you see a nice park used for baseball and softball games, then you pass the location of the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) and finally at the foot of Arsenal Street you see a sign which proudly proclaims this U. S. Army Corps of Engineer facility was established in 1882.

Did you know the area from the ballpark to the Mississippi River was once a military facility? Let me tell you more. On 20 May 1826, Congress passed an act authorizing a U. S. Arsenal at St. Louis. A site was selected fronting on the Mississippi River approximately three miles below St. Louis. On 3 August 1827 the property was obtained. The transaction included 36.96 acres, which consisted of a mixture of timbered and cultivated land. The site itself was largely underdeveloped. By the end of 1827 the first building, a one and one half story timber gun house had been erected. The main arsenal building was completed in the following year. This three story high stone structure measured 120 by 40 feet.

By 1828 the Arsenal had begun to manufacture and repair arms and gun carriages. In 1829 the first dated shipment of ordnance arrived and it consisted of 12,000, 6-pounder and 3,000, 12-pounder cannon balls. During the same year, Fort Bellefontaine was abandoned and 100 tons of ordnance

stores were moved from there to the new St. Louis Arsenal.

By 1833, 16 enlisted men and 12 hired men worked at the arsenal whose activities consisted of repairing small arms, fabricating ammunition, preserving military stores and supplying the militia. By 1840, 22 buildings had been erected and an enclosing wall, wells and cisterns had been constructed.

Between the 1820's and 1852, the population of St. Louis had risen from approximately 5,000 people to 94,000 people and the city was rapidly surrounding the arsenal.

In 1861 the Civil War had begun (my

in February with the intention of passing an Ordinance of Secession by said Convention. This did not turn out like they expected because the people of Missouri, declaring by a 60,000 majority elected to stay with the Union.

The folks with confederate tendencies wanted the ordnance located in the St. Louis Arsenal. Some 20,000 muskets were stored in the main Arsenal building. The commandant of the St. Louis Arsenal was Major W. A. Bell of the Ordnance Department, a North Carolinian, a thorough rebel, but too much of an old soldier and regular army officer to turn the Arsenal over to the folks wanting the



1980 excavation of Old Arsenal riverside wall. Today, this magnificent stone work is hidden under the Service Base parking lot.

friends in Vicksburg call this the war of northern aggression).

Of course the strategic importance of St. Louis and its two military outposts, Jefferson Barracks and the St. Louis Arsenal was obvious.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, things were very much confused in Missouri. There were Union men and the secessionists. Early in January 1861, the governor and a majority of the Legislature of Missouri being rank rebels, passed a resolution ordering an election for a Constitutional Convention to meet

muskets. Soon after the inauguration of President Lincoln, command of the Arsenal was turned over to Captain Nathaniel Lyon.

Now you know why there is a statue in the ballpark on the way to the Service Base. Yes, the statue is of General Nathan Lyon and it is located in Lyon Park. You see, the then Captain Lyon led 6,000 troops and surprised the sleeping camp of southern sympathizers and forced them to surrender without a shot being fired. This undoubtedly kept St. Louis and Missouri in the Union. The





statue was moved to its current location in 1960.

From 1861 to 1870 the activities of the Arsenal were greatly expanded and vast quantities of munitions were produced, repaired and shipped. By 1863, 700 civilian workers were employed at the arsenal, including 150 children making cartridges. By 1870 only 50 soldiers remained on duty at the site.

In 1871, the old arsenal site became a cavalry depot; known first as the St. Louis Depot. The cavalry was moved from the former arsenal to Jefferson Barracks in 1878 because the arsenal grounds were deemed unsuitable, being too small and the spot became a depot for the Quartermaster Corps.

In 1882 the lands between the railroad right of way and the Mississippi River were turned over to the St. Louis District, U.S. Engineers Office for use as a boat repair yard and storage depot.

When I was doing the research for this article, I found this site had been occupied even earlier than 1827. The Diocese of St. Louis recalls their first beginnings and traces them to 8 December 1698. On that date – over three hundred years ago – on the banks of the Mississippi River in the vicinity of the foot of Arsenal Street, three missionaries offered Mass for the first time.

I did some additional research and discovered this site has been inhabited almost continuously for quite a long time. Evidence indicates habitation beginning with the late Middle Archaic Helton phase (4000 to 3000 B.C.), extending through the Late Archaic Titterington phase (2500 to 1500 B.C.) and ending with the Late Archaic Riverton culture occupation (1500 to 1000 B.C.). Additional evidence exists that suggests intermittent habitation from 900 to 1400 A.D. during the Mississippian Period.

The next time you visit the Service Base, you may want to recall the historical significance of this site. We have been there since 1882 (over 120 years) and we occupy a very interesting piece of property.

## Retiree's Corner



Well, it was a beautiful day for the retiree's lunch. No clouds and only a dusting of snow on the ground. However the news media made it appear that a blizzard was coming and the street dept said stay off the streets.

Consequently schools were closed and lots of people decided not to go out. As a result the Salad Bowl had prepared the usual food items and since Norman saw that no one was coming in for lunch he decided to let those brave souls who did come have a free lunch on him.

Larry McCarthy and Charlie Denzel got anything in the place to eat free. They rolled out about three hours later both FAT and SASSY. What a

wonderful lunch. They talked about John Jansen coming over to Charlie's house for lunch on Christmas day. They had a nice visit and John had some great war time stories. Of course he had a hard time remembering names of some of the people and at one point he looked at me and said, "WHO ARE YOU AGAIN". Charlie Denzel, I told him. "We lost George Postol to the cancer guy and lots of Corps people came to the funeral mass at Mary Mother on Kerth Road including the DE and the Deputy and their spouses.

It was learned that Ted Postol, George's brother had retired on 3 January and he will now be attending the retirees luncheon on the third Thursday at the Salad Bowl on Lindell near Vandeventer. Also its rummored that Wally Feld will retire on 1 April. Is this an April fools joke, Wally?

Maybe not, for his wife Kathy said a lunch was being planned at the Orlando Gardens on Watson near the end of March, like maybe the 28th.

Our deepest condolence to Karen Postol and her family. George will surely be missed.

## Retiring soon? Great!

You'll have time to work on that invention.

Older inventors are playing a growing role in the invention business, says John Calvert, acting director of the Patent Office's Office of Independent Inventor Programs.

It makes sense. Older inventors have a broader range of experience and knowledge to draw on. And once they retire, they have the time to work on their ideas and the resources to develop and patent them. At age 73, Dr. Merton Flemings, holder of some 30 patents and faculty adviser to Lemelson-MIT Prize Program, says older inventors assimilate new ideas more easily. The MIT program annually awards a \$500,000 price to an inventor.

Got a good idea? Make sure someone else hasn't patented the product or process. Check the Web site of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office at

[www.uspto.gov](http://www.uspto.gov). It has a listing of all patents granted by the Patent and Trademark Office since 1790 and breaks them down into general classifications.

If you decide your idea is patentable, the next step is to see if anyone wants to buy it. Talk to several companies that would normally market a product such as yours to see if there is an interest.

Last year the Patent Office granted 344,000 patents. Only about one in five went to individuals, but that's 20 percent more than the previous year.

A patent attorney will draw up the application and include wording to keep others from "inventing around" it.

About 70 percent of all applications are approved. Ideas for toys, coolers, alarm clocks, toothpaste holders, high-tech lasers and surgical instruments have been recently approved.

# Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

As we celebrate the 74th birth anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr., we have indelible memories of him and his work: King speaking to thousands in Washington, D.C., leading the civil rights marchers, directing the Southern Christian Leadership Conference,—or standing the balcony of a motel on April 4, 1968.

That was the day an assassin's bullet silenced King, one of the most moving speakers of his time. It was just one day after his "Mountaintop" speech.

Because there were many attempts on his life, King had a premonition about his death. In a moving speech the night before his assassination, he said:

"We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter to me now, because I've been to the Mountaintop and I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that

now. I just want to do God's will, and He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over and I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight, that we as a people will get to the Promised Land."

Dr. King had studied the life and teachings of Mahatma

Gandhi and found they added much to his own vision of nonviolent protest. He believed that you do not intimidate people into doing things, that you had to reach into people's hearts.

In his book *Strength to Love*, (Fortress Press), King writes: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

The true neighbor will risk his position, his prestige and even his life for the welfare of others."

